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**NEW YORK MAN ARRESTED IN BALTIMORE SEIZURE
OF 154 KILOGRAMS OF COCAINE**

Baltimore, Maryland. United States Attorney Thomas M. DiBiagio announced that Paul Chooweenam, age 33, of Jamaica, New York, was arrested and charged by criminal complaint today with conspiracy to import more than five kilograms of cocaine into the United States from the Republic of Guyana.

The criminal complaint alleges that in mid-February of this year, agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) received information that approximately 155 kilograms of cocaine were being shipped via freighter from the Republic of Guyana to Savannah, Georgia. The cocaine was to be inside a shipping container packed with building products. The freighter arrived in Savannah on February 24 and the container was then driven under ICE surveillance to the Baltimore area. On the evening of February 25 Chooweenam arrived at the shipping container's location, driving a Ford Expedition. Chooweenam had four suitcases with him. The shipping container was opened in Chooweenam's presence, and 154 one-kilogram bricks of cocaine were removed. Chooweenam loaded approximately 130 of the bricks into the suitcases, and placed them into his vehicle. Chooweenam was arrested after the suitcases were inside the vehicle.

If convicted, Chooweenam faces a sentence of up to life imprisonment and a \$4 million fine.

A complaint or indictment is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by either complaint or indictment is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

This investigation was conducted jointly by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Baltimore City Police Department under the HIDTA Seaport Group, whose members also include the Baltimore County Police Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Department of Natural Resources Police, the Maryland State Police and the Ocean City Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys James G. Warwick and Craig M. Wolff.